Sluger, "FBI"



uncertain relevance to the requirements of the lab and beyond the skills of many of its technicians.

Some 75 percent of the lab's work is in Bureau-related cases, including complicated civil suits to which the federal government is a party; but it also provides its services to state and local law enforcement agencies. The agents from the lab who testify in court are permitted to do so only after a rigorous training program, which includes "moot court" rehearsals to prepare them for the tactics of eloquent and experienced defense attorneys and graduate study of forensic science. Once they are experienced, the agents may spend most of their time touring the nation, providing precise and conclusive testimony for the prosecution that impresses juries and sends men and women off to jail. Some agents have appeared in hundreds of cases. "Many defense attorneys will often stipulate to vital information, when they learn that someone from the FBI Lab is about to testify," says Briggs J. White, assistant director for the laboratory; "that is because it has been established throughout the country that we give completely objective testimony and we send out very well qualified people." White, who holds a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Colorado, has been in the FBI Lab since 1940, when he joined as a "junior analytical chemist"; he became an agent a year and a half later, but never served in a field assignment.*

This is the guts of the FBI – the extraordinary fingerprint collection, the massive files, a laboratory that brings science to police and intelligence work, and a fast, secure communications network. Without the backup that they provide, without their much-publicized efficiency, any investigation would obviously be less meaningful and the FBI would be less able to help local authorities fight crime. The fingerprints and the files are among the chief sources of the FBI's influence in the police world and of its power in Washington. They are resources that no other agency could hope to match or imitate.

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To manage the Bureau's laboratory work, fingerprints, files, and communications requires thousands of clerical employees – although many of them will soon be eliminated by automation – but relatively few trained and experienced FBI agents. Perhaps a hundred agents

* Thompson, Marshall, and White all retired from the FBI between the time they were interviewed and the completion of this book. Director Clarence M. Kelley replaced Marshall and White, who had spent virtually their entire Bureau careers at headquarters in Washington, with men who had greater experience in the field.